

Message Text

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ACTION NODS-00

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 /001 W
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O 241200Z AUG 78
FM AMEMBASSY LUSAKA
TO SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 9100

S E C R E T SECTION 1 OF 2 LUSAKA 2976

NODIS

E.O. 11652: XGDS-3
TAGS: PDEV PINT RH ZA NI US UK
SUBJ: RHODESIA: SMITH-NKOMO MEET ON FUTURE OF RHODESIA

REF: LUSAKA 2924

1. SUMMARY: EDWARD NDLOVU, ZAPU SECOND DEPUTY SECRETARY FOR FOREIGN AFFAIRS, SAYS THAT NKOMO AND SMITH HAVE MET IN ZAMBIA WITHIN LAST TEN DAYS TO DISCUSS TRANSFER OF POWER TO NKOMO. MEETING WAS ARRANGED WITH FULL KNOWLEDGE OF NIGERIANS, AND GARBA PARTICIPATED IN THE NKOMO-SMITH MEETING. SMITH INITIALLY INSISTED THAT NKOMO COME HOME WITHOUT MUGABE, BUT NKOMO REMAINED ADAMANT ABOUT INCLUDING MUGABE. SMITH AGREED TO MUGABE AFTER NIGERIANS GAVE ASSURANCES THAT HE WOULD BE "A GOOD BOY." SECOND MEETING WITH SMITH HAD BEEN SCHEDULED TO FOLLOW PATRIOTIC FRONT COORDINATING MEETING (AUGUST 18-20) IN LUSAKA BUT WAS POSTPONED AT INSISTENCE OF MUGABE. NDLOVU SAID BRITISH HAVE BEEN INFORMED OF THE SMITH-NKOMO MEETING BUT NOT OF RESULTS. HE SAID HE WAS PASSING INFORMATION TO CHARGE FOR AMBASSADOR LOW IN THE HOPE THAT IT COULD PROVE USEFUL IN HIS EFFORTS IN SALISBURY. HE CAUTIONED AGAINST DISCUSSING WHAT WAS GOING ON WITH THE BRITISH FOR FEAR THAT OWEN WOULD TRY TO GET INTO THE ACT AND IN SO DOING "SCREW THINGS UP." END SUMMARY.

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2. CHARGE'S CONVERSATION WITH NDLOVU TOOK PLACE AT RECEPTION NIGHT OF AUGUST 23. AFTER INITIAL PLEASANTRIES HE DREW CHARGE TO ONE SIDE. EXCHANGE OF VIEWS CENTERED AT FIRST ON RECENT PATRIOTIC FRONT COORDINATING MEETING. FROM THIS NDLOVU MOVED TO THE RECENT MEETING BETWEEN SMITH AND NKOMO.

3. NDLOVU SAID A MEETING BETWEEN NKOMO AND SMITH HAD TAKEN

PLACE IN ZAMBIA WITHIN THE LAST TEN DAYS. HE WOULD NOT BE DRAWN OUT ON EXACTLY WHEN OR WHERE. MEETING WAS AT THE INITIATIVE OF SMITH AND HAD BEEN ARRANGED THROUGH INTERMEDIARIES. PRIOR TO THE MEETING, EMISSARIES FROM VARIOUS ELEMENTS OF RHODESIAN SOCIETY (CHURCH, BUSINESS WERE SPECIFICALLY CITED) HAD SOUGHT OUT NKOMO IN LUSAKA. THEY ALL HAD THE SAME MESSAGE: COME HOME NKOMO, THE COUNTRY NEEDS YOU. THIS WAS FOLLOWED UP BY A MEETING ARRANGED IN LONDON BETWEEN NKOMO AND CHIRAU. THIS MEETING WAS BROUGHT ABOUT BY UNIDENTIFIED INTERMEDIARIES. IT TOOK PLACE IN THE PRESENCE OF GARBA WHO WAS THERE AT THE INSISTENCE OF NKOMO. GARBA'S PRESENCE HAD BEEN RESISTED BY SMITH, BUT NKOMO WAS ADAMANT ON THIS POINT BECAUSE "HE WANTED PROTECTION FROM CHARGES OF DOUBLE DEALING SHOULD NEWS OF HIS MEETING LEAK."

4. CHIRAU'S MESSAGE TO NKOMO WAS THE SAME AS THAT OF THE VARIOUS DELEGATIONS WHICH HAD PREVIOUSLY SOUGHT OUT NKOMO: COME HOME THE COUNTRY NEEDS YOU. HOWEVER, HE WAS MORE SPECIFIC-- HE TOLD NKOMO THAT SMITH WAS PREPARED TO TURN OVER FULL POWER TO NKOMO. HE URGED NKOMO TO MEET DIRECTLY WITH SMITH TO DISCUSS HOW SUCH A TRANSFER MIGHT TAKE PLACE. NKOMO EXPRESSED WILLINGNESS TO MEET WITH SMITH BUT INSISTED THAT ANY AGREEMENT MUST INCLUDE MUGABE. CHIRAU ARGUED AGAINST THIS. HOWEVER, CONFRONTED BY NKOMO'S OBSTINANCY ON THIS POINT HE PROMISED TO SEE IF HE COULD BRING SMITH ALONG TO ACCEPTING MUGABE. NKOMO WAS FAVORABLY IMPRESSED BY CHIRAU. (COMMENT: PERHAPS BECAUSE CHIRAU
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TOLD NKOMO THAT HE WAS THE "GUIDING LIGHT FOR ALL THESE SEEKING THE INDEPENDENCE OF RHODESIA." AND HE, CHIRAU, WOULD NEVER HAVE JOINED THE INTERNAL SETTLEMENT IF HE HAD NOT BEEN TOLD BY SITHOLE AND MUZOREWA THAT NKOMO APPROVED OF THE ARRANGEMENT WITH SMITH.)

5. NKOMO'S INSISTENCE ON INCLUDING MUGABE INITIALLY PROVED TO BE A STUMBLING BLOCK TO AN NKOMO-SMITH MEETING. A FURTHER CAUSE FOR DELAY WAS NKOMO'S INSISTENCE THAT ANY MEETING WITH SMITH SHOULD TAKE PLACE WITH NIGERIANS (GARBA) PRESENT. NKOMO AND KAUNDA WERE AGREED THAT NIGERIA MUST BE REPRESENTED. KAUNDA DID NOT WANT TO STAND ACCUSED AT SOME FUTURE POINT OF SECRETLY ARRANGING AN UNDERHANDED DEAL FOR THIS FRIEND NKOMO. NKOMO, ON HIS PART, WANTED A NEUTRAL WITNESS TO WHATEVER WAS DISCUSSED AND AGREED.

6. THE NKOMO-SMITH MEETING TOOK PLACE IN ZAMBIA AFTER SMITH HAD FINALLY AGREED TO GARBA'S PRESENCE AND THE NEED TO INCLUDE MUGABE IN ANY AGREEMENT. THE MEETING WAS OPENED BY KAUNDA WHO WITHDREW AFTER THE PRELIMINARIES. SMITH OPENED BY URGING THE NEED FOR NKOMO TO RETURN. SMITH SAID HE WAS TIRED AND DISCOURAGED. HE RECOGNIZED THAT THE TIME HAD COME TO TRANSFER

POWER TO THE BLACKS, BUT HE WAS COMPLETELY DISILLUSIONED BY MUZOREWA AND SITHOLE. THEY WERE UTTERLY INCOMPETENT TO RUN RHODESIA AND NKOMO WAS THE ONLY MAN CAPABLE OF DOING SO. SMITH AT FIRST URGED UPON NKOMO THE NEED TO RETURN WITHOUT MUGABE. HOWEVER, HE RELENTED ON THIS POINT WHEN HE SAW THAT NKOMO WOULD NOT BE BUDGED AND AFTER GARBA HAD GIVEN ASSURANCES THAT THE NIGERIANS WOULD SEE TO IT THAT MUGABE WOULD BE A "GOOD BOY." CHARGE ASKED IF SMITH HAD POSED CONDITIONS FOR NKOMO'S ASSUMPTION OF POWER. HE SAID SMITH HAD NOT BECAUSE HE RECOGNIZED THAT HE COULD COUNT UPON NKOMO'S "GOOD SENSE AS A GUARANTEE OF PROTECTION FOR THE RHODESIAN WHITES." THE MEETING ENDED WITH THE UNDERSTANDING THAT A SECOND MEETING WOULD TAKE PLACE AFTER NKOMO HAD DISCUSSED SMITH'S OFFER WITH MUGABE.

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7. THE PATRIOTIC FRONT COORDINATING MEETING IN LUSAKA AUGUST 18-20 WAS CONDUCTED ON AT LEAST TWO LEVELS. THE FIRST WAS THE RELATIVELY OVERT ONE WHERE OUTSTANDING QUESTIONS OF MILITARY AND POLITICAL UNITY WERE DISCUSSED. AT A SECOND LEVEL, GARBA AND NKOMO DISCUSSED SMITH'S PROPOSAL FOR TURNING OVER POWER WITH MUGABE, TONGOGARA AND TEKERE. IN THESE DISCUSSIONS, IT WAS MADE CLEAR TO MUGABE THAT HE, AND BY EXTENSION ZANU, MUST ACCEPT A ROLE SECONDARY TO THAT OF NKOMO AND ZAPU. IT WAS FORCIBLY ARGUED THAT NKOMO WAS THE SENIOR LIBERATION FIGURE IN ZIMBABWE AND THAT ZAPU WAS SENIOR TO ZANU. MUGABE

RESISTED THESE ARGUMENTS AT FIRST AND UNDER INCREASING PRESSURE SAID THAT BEFORE GIVING A DECISION HE WOULD HAVE TO CHECK IT OUT WITH HIS PEOPLE IN MAPUTO. NDLOVU SCORNFULLY TOLD THE CHARGE THAT THIS WAS RIDICULOUS SINCE MUGABE HAD HIS FULL CENTRAL COMMITTEE WITH HIM IN LUSAKA.

8. IT WAS AT THIS POINT THAT ARRANGEMENTS WERE MADE FOR MUGABE TO TRAVEL TO LAGOS TO MEET WITH OBASANJO. THERE OBASANJO AGAIN WORKED ON HIM, INSISTING THAT THE TIME WAS RIPE FOR A TRANSFER OF POWER AND ARGUING THAT IN THE INTEREST OF HIS COUNTRY, MUGABE AND HIS ORGANIZATION MUST TAKE A ROLE SECONDARY TO THAT OF NKOMO. NDLOVU SAID THAT TEKERE AND TONGOGARA VEHEMENTLY OBJECTED TO ZANU PLAYING SECOND FIDDLE TO ZAPU. HE SAID AT THAT POINT IN THE TALKS OBASANJO TOLD THEM TO "SHUT UP AND DO AS YOU ARE TOLD." THE MEETING WITH OBASANJO ENDED WITH MUGABE
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AGAIN INSISTING THAT HE WOULD HAVE TO CHECK OUT THE PROPOSED ZAPU-ZANU FUSION WITH HIS PEOPLE IN MAPUTO.

9. ON HIS RETURN TO LUSAKA, MUGABE MET WITH THE PRESS AND MADE A NUMBER OF STATEMENTS (REFTEL) ABOUT THE PROGRESS WHICH HAD BEEN MADE TOWARDS PATRIOTIC FRONT UNITY. THIS PRESS CONFERENCE INFURIATED NKOMO SINCE THE UNDERSTANDING HAD BEEN THAT MUGABE'S TRIP TO LAGOS WOULD BE SECRET. FURTHER, IT HAD BEEN AGREED THAT NO PUBLICITY WOULD BE GIVEN TO HOW THINGS HAD GONE IN THE UNITY TALKS. (COMMENT: THE RATIONALE BEHIND MUGABE'S STATEMENT TO THE PRESS THAT FORHIS PART HE WOULD BE WILLING TO TAKE A SECONDARY POSITION IN A UNIFIED PATRIOTIC FRONT IS, IN LIGHT OF THE FOREGOING, MUCH CLEARER. HIS RATHER BITTER COMMENT THAT THIS MIGHT NOT BE TRUE FOR OTHERS ALSO IS MORE UNDERSTANDABLE.)

10. THE SECOND MEETING WITH SMITH, WHICH HAD BEEN SET TO FOLLOW-ING IMMEDIATELY THE AUGUST 18-20 PF COORDINATING MEETING, DID NOT TAKE PLACE DUE TO MUGABE'S INSISTENCE THAT HE HAD TO CHECK WITH HIS PEOPLE IN MAPUTO. (COMMENT: AGAIN, NDLOVU WAS SCORNFUL OF THIS EXCUSE SINCE MUGABE HAD HIS CENTRAL COMMITTEE WITH HIM.)

11. NDLOVU SAID HE DID NOT KNOW WHEN MUGABE WOULD GIVE HIS AGREEMENT FOR ANOTHER MEETING WITH SMITH, BUT SUCH AGREEMENT WAS INEVITABLE. GARBA HAD TRAVELLED WITH MUGABE TO MAPUTO TO WORK ON HIM SOME MORE, AND GARBA WAS KEEPING MACHEL AND NYERERE FULLY IN THE PICTURE. NDLOVU SAID HE BELIEVED THAT MACHEL WOULD LEAN ON MUGABE TO ACCEPT SINCE MACHEL WANTED AN END TO THE WAR WHICH WAS TEARING UP HIS COUNTRY. NYERERE MIGHT RESIST SOMEWHAT OUT OF HIS DISLIKE FOR NKOMO, BUT THE NIGERIANS WOULD PROBABLY BRING HIM ALONG. FURTHER, WHEN THE CHIPS ARE DOWN MUGABE AND ZANU HAVE NO CHOICE: EITHER THEY RETURN TO RHODESIA AS JUNIOR

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PARTNERS TO ZAPU OR THEY ARE CUT ENTIRELY OUT OF A SETTLEMENT. MUGABE AND HIS PEOPLE REALIZE THAT THEY CANNOT COMPETE EITHER POLITICALLY OR MILITARILY WITH ZAPU ONCE THEY ARE ON THE INSIDE.

12. NDLOVU SAID HE WAS GIVING THE CHARGE A RUNDOWN ON SMITH-NKOMO DEVELOPMENTS SO THIS INFORMATION MIGHT PROVIDE BACKGROUND FOR AMBASSADOR LOW IN HIS DISCUSSIONS IN SALISBURY. ZAPU WAS INTERESTED IN KEEPING UP THE MOMENTUM IN ITS DISCUSSIONS WITH SMITH, AND AMBASSADOR LOW MIGHT BE ABLE TO HELP IN THAT REGARD. HE SAID THAT THE BRITISH WERE AWARE THAT THE MEETING WITH SMITH HAD TAKEN PLACE BUT HAD NOT BEEN INFORMED OF ITS RESULT. OWEN HAD BEEN INFORMED OF THE PROPOSED MEETING BY GARBA IN LONDON. GARBA HAD CAUTIONED OWEN TO DO NOTHING AND TO MAKE NO STATEMENTS WHICH MIGHT JEOPARDIZE THE PROCESS THEN BEING SET IN MOTION. NDLOVU SAID HE WAS CONCERNED THAT HIS DISCUSSION WITH THE CHARGE MIGHT GET BACK TO OWEN. IF IT DID, OWEN MIGHT JUMP OFF ON SOME INITIATIVE OF HIS OWN WHICH MIGHT "SCREW THINGS UP."

13. COMMENT: I DO NOT BELIEVE NDLOVU WAS AUTHORIZED TO INFORM ME ABOUT THE NKOMO-SMITH DISCUSSIONS. OUR MEETING WAS TOTALLY CASUAL IN NATURE. HOWEVER, I HAVE KNOWN NDLOVU FOR BETTER THAN TWO YEARS AND WORKED WITH HIM ON SENSITIVE MATTERS DURING THE KISSINGER INITIATIVE. THIS MAY HAVE LED HIM TO OPEN UP. HIS ACCOUNT MAY NOT BE TOTALLY ACCURATE IN DETAIL, BUT WE HAVE SEEN ENOUGH IN THE WAY OF CORROBORATING EVIDENCE TO SUGGEST THAT HIS RENDITION OF RECENT EVENTS IS NEAR THE MARK. I SHARE HIS CONCERN THAT THE BRITISH (OWEN) MAY TRY TO IMPROVE ON WHAT IS BEING WORKED OUT BY NKOMO, THE NIGERIANS, KAUNDA AND SMITH, AND IN SO DOING "SCREW THINGS UP." I HOPE THAT HIS TRUST IN ME WILL BE RESPECTED BY THOSE HAVING ACCESS TO THIS MESSAGE.

14. SUGGEST DEPARTMENT PASS TO AMBASSADOR LOW IF THOUGHT TO BE APPROPRIATE. CLINGERMAN

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Message Attributes

Automatic Decaptioning: X
Capture Date: 01 jan 1994
Channel Indicators: n/a
Current Classification: UNCLASSIFIED
Concepts: INDEPENDENCE, INTERIM GOVERNMENT, GOVERNMENT REFORM, POLITICAL LEADERS, MEETING REPORTS, MINORITIES, CAT-B
Control Number: n/a
Copy: SINGLE
Draft Date: 24 aug 1978
Decaption Date: 01 jan 1960
Decaption Note:
Disposition Action: RELEASED
Disposition Approved on Date:
Disposition Case Number: n/a
Disposition Comment: 25 YEAR REVIEW
Disposition Date: 20 Mar 2014
Disposition Event:
Disposition History: n/a
Disposition Reason:
Disposition Remarks:
Document Number: 1978LUSAKA02976
Document Source: CORE
Document Unique ID: 00
Drafter: n/a
Enclosure: n/a
Executive Order: X3
Errors: N/A
Expiration:
Film Number: P850103-2313
Format: TEL
From: LUSAKA
Handling Restrictions: n/a
Image Path:
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Line Count: 263
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Litigation History:
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Office: ACTION NODS
Original Classification: SECRET
Original Handling Restrictions: n/a
Original Previous Classification: n/a
Original Previous Handling Restrictions: NODIS
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Previous Channel Indicators: n/a
Previous Classification: SECRET
Previous Handling Restrictions: NODIS
Reference: 78 LUSAKA 2924
Retention: 0
Review Action: RELEASED, APPROVED
Review Content Flags:
Review Date: 28 apr 2005
Review Event:
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Review Release Date: n/a
Review Release Event: n/a
Review Transfer Date:
Review Withdrawn Fields: n/a
SAS ID: 1634997
Secure: OPEN
Status: NATIVE
Subject: RHODESIA: SMITH-NKOMO MEET ON FUTURE OF RHODESIA
TAGS: PDEV, PINT, PGOV, RH, ZI, NI, US, UK, ZA, (SMITH, IAN D), (NKOMO, JOSHUA)
To: STATE
Type: TE
vdkgvwkey: odbc://SAS/SAS.dbo.SAS_Docs/6f0ea45c-c288-dd11-92da-001cc4696bcc
Review Markings:
Sheryl P. Walter
Declassified/Released
US Department of State
EO Systematic Review
20 Mar 2014
Markings: Sheryl P. Walter Declassified/Released US Department of State EO Systematic Review 20 Mar 2014